



Department of Justice

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Employee of Tuskegee Attorney Indicted for Embezzling Funds From Veterans' Accounts

Montgomery, Alabama - Joy Farmer, 41, of Columbus, Georgia, was arraigned today on federal bank fraud charges arising out of her embezzlement of funds from veterans' bank accounts, Leura G. Canary, United States Attorney, announced today.

The indictment, which was unsealed today, alleges that Farmer was employed as an administrative assistant for an attorney in Tuskegee, Alabama (the "Attorney"). The Attorney had been appointed as a fiduciary for several individuals receiving veterans benefits pursuant to the Fiduciary Program of the United States Department of Veterans Affairs ("VA"), which oversees benefits paid to beneficiaries who are incapable of handling their funds—either because they are minors or because of injury, disease, or old age. For each beneficiary, the Attorney established a bank account to receive VA benefits and pay appropriate expenses (the "Beneficiary Accounts").

The indictment further alleges that between January 1999 and May 2004, Farmer embezzled approximately \$626,101.67 from 25 different Beneficiary Accounts by writing 327 checks to herself from the Beneficiary Accounts, forging the Attorney's signature on the checks, depositing the checks in her own bank account, and using the funds to pay personal expenses. To conceal her conduct, Farmer would (a) deposit checks drawn on one Beneficiary Account into a different Beneficiary Account, and (b) deposit funds intended for one beneficiary to be deposited into the Beneficiary Account of a different beneficiary.

The indictment charges Farmer with eight counts of bank fraud, each of which carries a statutory maximum sentence of 30 years imprisonment, a fine of up to \$1 million, and an order of restitution.

An indictment merely alleges that crimes have been committed, and defendants are presumed innocent until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt.

At her arraignment today, Farmer pleaded not guilty and was released by Chief Magistrate Judge Susan R. Walker on a \$25,000 unsecured bond. Trial was set for August 22, 2011 in Opelika before Chief United States District Judge Mark E. Fuller.

The case was investigated by the VA's Office of Inspector General. The case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Andrew O. Schiff and Gray M. Borden.